



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests
Forest Supervisor's Office
903 3rd Street, Kamiah, ID 83536
208-935-2513 (office)

File Code: 1950
Date: January 24, 2018

Dear Planning Participant:

We will be considering the enclosed project proposals and conducting environmental analyses on them in the near future.

You are being notified of these proposals because you have expressed interest in projects on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests.

Preliminary assessments have been made that the following projects fall within a category of actions listed in 36 CFR 220.6, thereby excluding them from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Please feel free to offer your comments regarding them (see next page).

Thank you for your continued participation in projects involving the Nez Perce – Clearwater National Forests.

Sincerely,

/S/ Cheryl F. Probert

CHERYL F. PROBERT
Forest Supervisor
Nez Perce – Clearwater National Forests

Enclosures: Project Descriptions and Maps

Information Regarding Public Comments

Please review the following proposals and submit your site-specific comments, as described below, for inclusion in our analyses for the projects.

Comments should be submitted as an email attachment, in Word (preferred) or PDF format, to:
comments-northern-nezperce@fs.fed.us.

If you choose to comment on the proposals, please include the following:

- (1) Your name, address, phone number, email address, and organization, if any;
- (2) Title of project; and,
- (3) Specific facts and relevant rationale you feel should be considered.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names, telephone numbers, addresses, and email addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection.

Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request this Agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the Agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality and the options available (see 7 CFR 1.27 for further information).

Please note that this opportunity for comment is primarily for you to make statements regarding why the project should or should not proceed as described below. If you have questions about any details regarding an individual project, we encourage you to please contact the project proponent, listed with each project on the pages below, to possibly get answers (including requests for more detailed project maps) before submitting your comments.

If you have any questions regarding comment submission, please contact Jeff Chynoweth, 208-935-4260 (work), 208-935-4275 (FAX); or, mail inquiries to: Supervisor's Office, Nez Perce-Clearwater NFs, 903 3rd Street, Kamiah, ID, 83536.

Please submit your comments by February 13, 2018, for full consideration.

Project Proposals

1) Klondike Group Exploration [North Fork Ranger District]

Proposed Category: 36 CFR 220.6(e) (8) *Short-term (one year or less) mineral, energy or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than one mile of low standard road or use and minor repair of existing roads.*

Legal Coordinates (Boise Meridian): Township 36 North, Range 6 East, Sections 2, 3 and 34

Background: There have been documented mining claims in the general area of the project since the 1930s. The area has ongoing timber projects. The purpose of the proposed action is to test for gold values on unpatented mining claims. The need is to determine if sufficient quantities of valuable minerals exist to warrant further exploration or development.

Proposed Action: The project proposes to use a backhoe to dig a trench, approximately 100 ft. in length and 10 ft. in depth, to expose a north-south vein for sampling. Surface soil and duff would be stockpiled to be used for reclamation. Due to potentially unstable rock and in order to maintain a 1:1 slope, the trench may be widened up to 75 ft. on either side to accommodate safe entry. The total area of disturbance from the trench would be approximately 0.35 acres. A diversion channel, as a curtain or “French” drain, would intercept any groundwater during excavation, allowing the water to flow back into the ground with minimum surface exposure.

Prior to project activities, a 75 ft. x 75 ft. (0.12-acre) landing/staging area would be created north of the project site to accommodate a ¾ ton pickup, backhoe, dump truck and exploration-associated rock loads. Timber would have to be cleared, possibly as part of an ongoing Forest Service timber sale, to make room for the staging area. The number of trees and the quality and value of the timber to be removed are currently unknown but would be determined by Forest Service personnel. If possible, some or all of the timber could be used to construct and level the pads in the landing/staging area.

Access to the site would be on an existing historic mining road. The approximately 700-foot road would be improved and widened to 14 ft. In addition, the road would be modified to avoid two existing springs.

Once sampling was completed, the samples would be taken off Forest for testing, and the site would be reclaimed by rock refill, replacement of the topsoil and duff, and seeding. All operations including reclamation measures would be completed by May 2019.

All appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs) for water quality standards and weed control, and State of Idaho BMPs for mining will be followed. In addition, standard mitigation measures have been developed for mining and will be implemented as appropriate. As part of this decision, the claimant will be required to:

1. Notify the North Fork District Ranger or minerals administrator 48 hours before any work is to begin.
2. Wash all vehicles and equipment used at the site before being brought onto National Forest System lands to prevent the spread of noxious weeds.

3. The site will be monitored for noxious weeds. Noxious weeds will be removed by qualified personnel.
 - a. Use suitable measures in compliance with local direction to prevent and control invasive species.
4. Avoid all disturbances to wetlands.
5. Avoid working on saturated soils.
6. All exploration related activities will be restricted to daylight hours.
7. Place weed-free straw bales or install silt fence around excavated site and in places identified by a Forest Service representative to minimize sediment migration to streams.
8. Remove all equipment, garbage and trash resulting from the operation from National Forest System lands prior to the end of the regular operating season.
 - a. Garbage and trash will be disposed of at a State of Idaho approved site.
9. Use and maintain a sanitary facility (porta-potty) at the project area while operations are ongoing.
10. Limit clearing, excavation, and other surface-disturbing activities to the minimum necessary for exploration needs.
 - a. Limit amount of exposed or disturbed soil at any one time to the minimum necessary for efficient operations during minerals production activities.
 - b. Clearly delineate the geographic limits of the area to be cleared.
 - c. Install suitable drainage measures to improve the workability of wet sites.
 - d. Avoid or minimize damage to existing vegetation, particularly the vegetation that is stabilizing the bank of a waterbody.
 - e. Stabilize mined areas and surface disturbance activities as soon as practicable before moving and opening up new areas.
11. Reduce surface-disturbing activities to the minimum necessary for efficient minerals exploration activities during periods of heavy runoff or saturated soil conditions, to the extent practicable, to decrease the potential for soil compaction and erosion.
12. Stockpile biologically active topsoil removed during excavation for use in reclamation.
 - a. Store stockpiled topsoil separately from other vegetative slash or soil and rock materials and protect from wind and water erosion, unnecessary compaction, and contaminants.
13. Store no more than 30 gallons of fuel or oil in the project area.
14. Store all fuel or oil in a secondary containment system that limits spills to the environment.
15. Conduct operations in such a manner as to avoid or minimize the production and transport of fugitive dust from the site.
16. Comply with all applicable Federal and State fire laws and regulations and take all reasonable measures to prevent and suppress fires on the area of operations and require employees, contractors and subcontractors to do likewise (36 CFR 228.11).

Cultural Resources:

1. If previously undiscovered cultural resources (historic or prehistoric objects, artifacts, or sites) are exposed as a result of operations, those operations will cease until notification is received from a Forest Service archeologist and District Ranger that provisions for mitigating unforeseen impacts as required by 36 CFR 228.4(e) and 36 CFR 800 have been complied with.

Reclamation Bond:

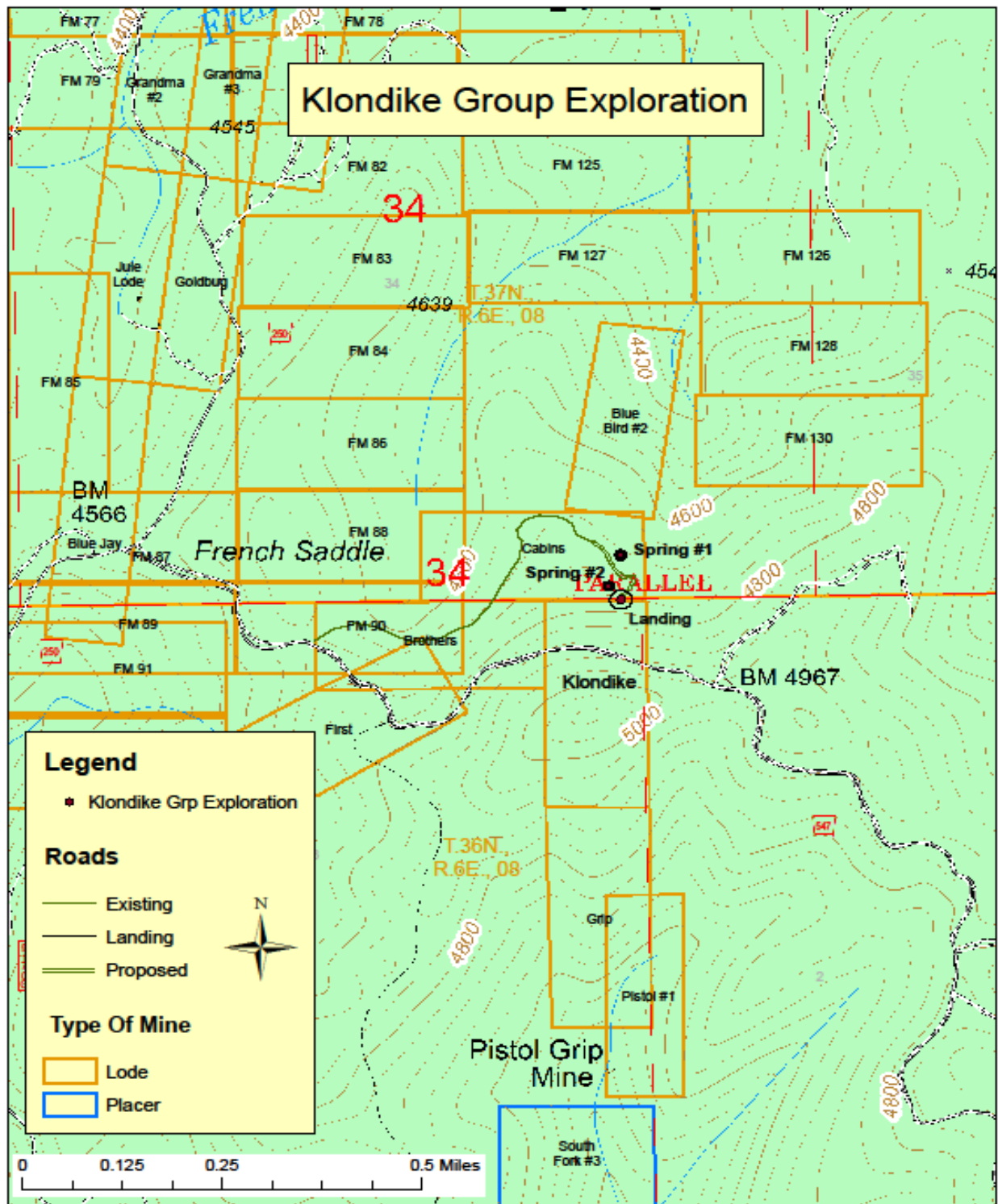
1. The operation will be bonded to insure reclamation.
2. Bond amount will be calculated by the Forest Service.

Once the District Ranger receives the bond the Plan of Operations would be approved.

Project Implementation: The project is proposed to begin during the 2018 field season, and would take a year or less to complete.

Project Information: Rebecca Anderson, Geologist, 208-476-8351, rebeccaanderson@fs.fed.us

Map of the Klondike Group Exploration Project



2) Major Fenn Side Channel Reconnection (Lochsa-Powell RD)

Proposed Category: 36 CFR 220.6(e)(18) *Restoring wetlands, streams, riparian areas or other water bodies by removing, replacing, or modifying water control structures such as, but not limited to, dams, levees, dikes, ditches, culverts, pipes, drainage tiles, valves, gates, and fencing, to allow waters to flow into natural channels and floodplains and restore natural flow regimes to the extent practicable where valid existing rights or special use authorizations are not unilaterally altered or canceled.*

Legal Coordinates (Boise Meridian): Township 33 North, Range 8 East, Section 5

Background: The project area is part of the Major Fenn National Recreation Trail, which is no longer maintained. Part of the trail is constructed of gabion baskets filled with river rock and capped with concrete. This gabion section runs along the edge of the Lochsa River, crossing and blocking a side channel that would otherwise create an island. The side channel is also blocked by earthen approaches to what was once a footbridge over the side channel adjacent to the parking area. The lower end of the channel has subsequently filled in and become overgrown with reed canary grass. The side channel contains water year-round via a combination of groundwater and surface (hyporheic) water.

The purpose of the project is to reconnect the side channel to the Lochsa River and to restore potentially valuable rearing habitat for juvenile salmonids. The recently completed ATLAS strategic prioritization process, which included participation from Forest Service, Idaho Fish and Game, and Nez Perce Tribe fisheries biologists, identified the lack of side channel habitat as a limiting factor on the mainstem Lochsa River. Restoring the side channel would provide over 0.3-miles of side channel habitat on the lower Lochsa river for both resident and anadromous fishes.

Proposed Action: The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests, in partnership with the Nez Perce Tribe, is proposing to remove the section of gabion basket trail and create a ‘persuasion’ channel that would allow river flow to enter the side channel. The proposal includes removing some of the material in the area of a former footbridge to bring the elevation down to a point that the side channel would once again become connected to the Lochsa River.

A contractor would access the project area using a section of abandoned road (near Mile Post 107 on Highway 12) that leads down to a dispersed camping site near the center of the project area. The road would be used for staging of equipment and possibly temporary storage of material. Access to the dispersed campsite would remain unchanged.

Using a small excavator (20,000 lb. range), the operator would pull the gabion baskets apart, removing the wire and concrete and salvaging the river rock which would be placed in a former borrow site adjacent to the trail. The wire baskets and concrete would be transported offsite via a dump truck.

Impacts of the project would be isolated to the raised portion of the trail adjacent to the river’s edge. There would be short-term sediment production as the channel was re-opened. Impacts to wildlife and fisheries should be minimal and transient.

Programmatic consultation with NOAA Fisheries and US Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as obtaining a 404 permit from the Army Corps of Engineers and an Idaho Department of Water Resources Stream Alteration Permit, would occur prior to work starting.

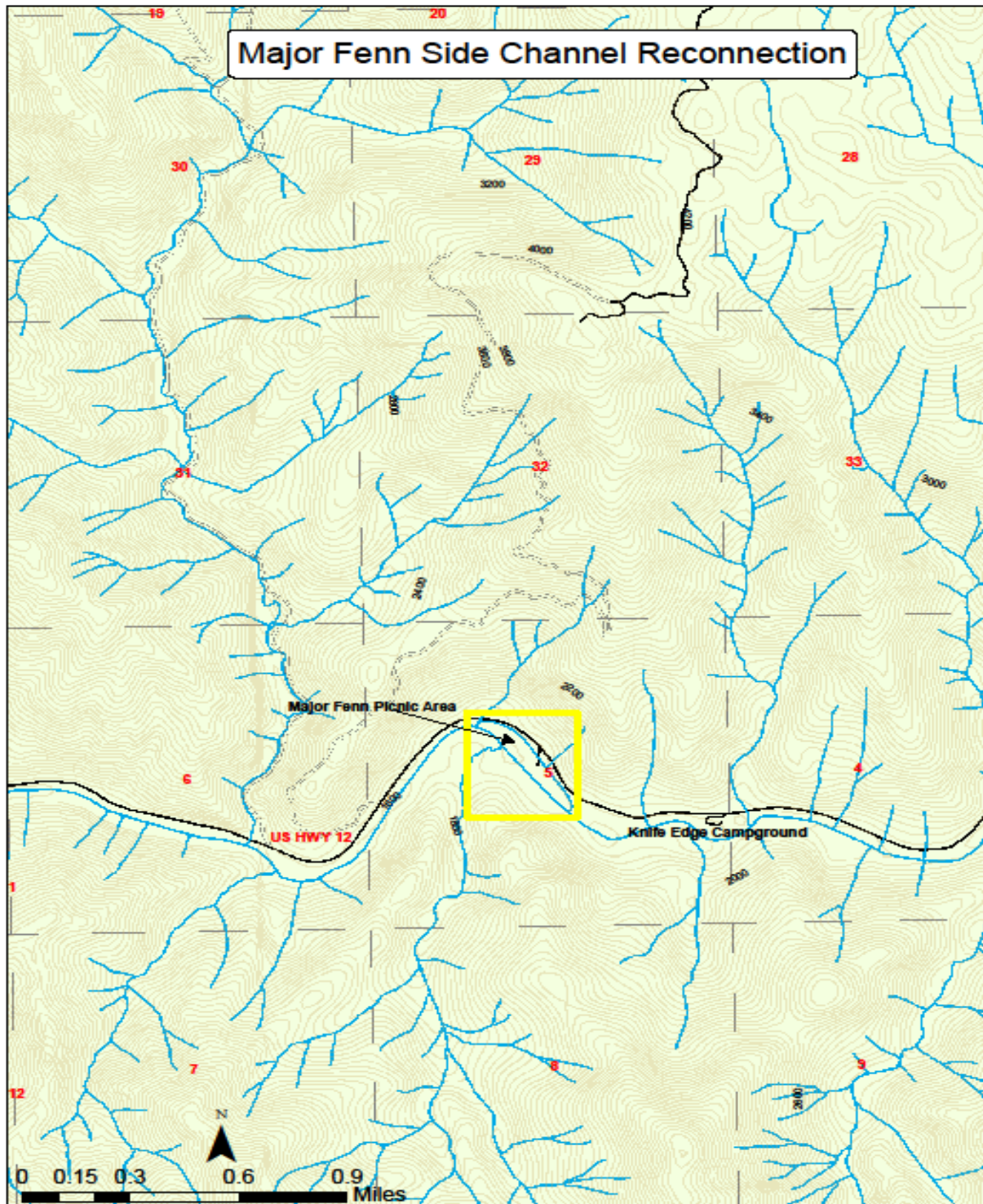
All appropriate Best Management Practices (National Core 2012 BMPs) and Terms and Conditions and Design Criteria in the Idaho Restoration Programmatic BO (NOAA and FWS) will be followed. In addition, the claimant will be required to:

- The excavator will be cleaned and inspected as “weed free” prior to any in-stream work.
- In the unlikely event of a broken hose only bio-based hydraulic oils will be allowed.
- Access to and the limits of excavator work will be flagged, with excavating limited to only that required to match stream bottom elevations to allow perennial flow through the side channel.
- Invasive plant species will be treated within the work area prior to the project start and monitored and treated, where and if necessary, after the project was completed.
- Disturbed areas will be planted with riparian shrub species, such as willow stakes, to encourage riparian vegetation establishment.
- Mechanical support will follow BMPs for fuel storage and machinery fueling.
- The contractor will have fuel spill containment supplies onsite in the event of a fuel spill and employees will be trained in the proper application and use of those materials.

Project Implementation: The project is expected to be completed in 2018 during lower river flows, i.e. within the NOAA and FWS designated ‘fish window’ (July through September). The project would take up to three weeks to complete.

Project Information: Rebecca Lloyd, Central Zone Soil Scientist, 208-942-0350, rebeccalloyd@fs.fed.us

Map of the Major Fenn Side Channel Reconnection Project



3) Steep Creek Logs Large Woody Debris Project (North Fork RD)

Proposed Category: 36 CFR 220.6(e)(19) *Removing and/or relocating debris and sediment following disturbance events (such as floods, hurricanes, tornados, mechanical/ engineering failures, etc.) to restore uplands, wetlands, or riparian systems to pre-disturbance conditions, to the extent practicable, such that site conditions will not impede or negatively alter natural processes.*

Legal Coordinates (Boise Meridian): Township 40 North, Range 7 East, Sections 6-7; Township 40 North, Range 8 East, Sections 4, 5, 8, 15, & 16; and Township 41 North, Range 7 East, Sections 20 and 29-31 (see attached map).

Background: The project area includes the lower reaches of Beaver Creek, Isabella Creek, Skull Creek, and Quartz Creek and adjacent riparian areas (see map). The recruitment and future supply of large woody debris has been substantially modified in the project area due to riparian trees being removed during road construction and continued felling or removal for road maintenance and by firewood cutters. As a result, the stream reaches and riparian zones (with the possible exception of Beaver Creek) are deficient in instream and riparian woody debris. This has reduced instream habitat quality for aquatic organisms and resulted in channel modification at high flow volumes.

The purpose of the project is to improve instream habitat complexity/quality for aquatic organisms, particularly ESA “Threatened” bull trout and Region 1 Sensitive Westslope cutthroat and redband trout, in the lower reaches of up to four tributaries of the North Fork Clearwater River. The need for the project is to mitigate for the removal (for road maintenance and protection) of debris and flow-delivered logs from Beaver Creek and its riparian habitat, due to the Steep Creek debris flow of March 2017. In addition, but to a lesser extent, the project is needed to mitigate for the maintenance of Forest Service (FS) system roads along the lower reaches of the other three project area streams.

Proposed Action: The North Fork Ranger District proposes to construct logjam structures within the active channel of Beaver Creek, Isabella Creek, Skull Creek, and/or Quartz Creek. A total of two to 10 sites, distributed between the four creeks, would be identified for logjam construction, with one to two structures (5 to 20 logs each) proposed at each site, for a total of 4 - 20 structures. It is anticipated that one or two structures could be constructed per day during project implementation. Depending on funding, logjam structures may not be constructed in all four creeks. The project would be completed through a contract under direct supervision of the North Zone Fisheries Biologist.

Project sites would be adjacent to (typically within 25-100 feet of) FS system roads. The specific sites, to be determined in 2018, would be based on site characteristics. Sites on Beaver Creek and Isabella Creek would be prioritized, in part, because implementation would be facilitated by their physical proximity to the log storage site (see below).

Following the 2017 Steep Creek debris flow, the deposited material blocking FS Road 247 was cleared and the wood removed from the Beaver Creek channel to prevent the creek from cutting into and further threatening the road prism. The 80 or so salvaged logs (~20 feet or greater in length) currently stored on the shoulder of FS Road 247 and directly adjacent to Beaver Creek would be used for logjam construction.

Approximately 1/3rd of the logs retain their rootwads and/or are of substantial length (> 40 feet) or diameter (> 2 feet) would be used as “key” logs to anchor the logjams. Incorporating stream channel and riparian features, such as bedrock, boulders, existing woody debris, standing trees, etc., would also help anchor the structures. Smaller (but still substantial) logs would be combined with the key logs to complete the structures. Excavation of the streambank or cables, metal pins, or driven pilings would not be used to supplement the stability of the structures.

The stockpiled logs (which may be relocated in the interim to the grounds of the Canyon Work Center) would be transported on log trucks or self-loaders to the project sites on Forest Service system roads. An excavator or similar equipment would be used to place the logs in the stream channel/riparian zone. The excavator would typically not enter the wetted stream channel during logjam construction, but instream operations may occur if allowed under ESA consultation. In addition to the excavator, block and tackle/winches may be used to place/manipulate the logs. Chainsaws and non-powered tools such as pickbars, shovels, and come-alongs may also be used to construct the logjam structures.

Ground disturbance would be confined to excavator tracks and placement/manipulation of the logs. Some vegetation disturbance would occur where off-road (excavator) travel is necessary and during log manipulation. Effects to vegetation should be imperceptible after a few growing seasons. Some trees may be damaged or would need to be felled during implementation. This would be avoided if practical, but any damaged or felled trees could be incorporated into logjam structures.

The logs would be individually numbered with aluminum tags and the structures photographed upon their completion. This would allow the structures to be monitored overtime to determine/demonstrate the stability and degree of channel modification achieved by the structures.

Programmatic consultation with NOAA Fisheries and US Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as obtaining a 404 permit from the Army Corps of Engineers and an Idaho Department of Water Resources Stream Alteration Permit would occur prior to the work starting.

All appropriate Best Management Practices (National Core 2012 BMPs) and Terms and Conditions and Design Criteria in the Idaho Restoration Programmatic BO (NOAA and FWS) will be followed. In addition, the claimant will be required to:

- The excavator will be cleaned and inspected as “weed free” prior to any instream work.
- In the unlikely event of a broken hose only bio-based hydraulic oils will be allowed.
- Access to and the limits of excavator work will be flagged, with excavating limited to only that required to match stream bottom elevations to allow perennial flow through the side channel.
- Invasive plant species will be treated within the work area prior to the project implementation and monitored and treated, where necessary, after the project was completed.
- Disturbed riparian areas will be planted with appropriate shrub species, such as willow stakes, to encourage riparian vegetation establishment.
- Areas disturbed by excavator tracks will be seeded with an appropriate native seed mix.
- Mechanical support will follow BMPs for fuel storage and machinery fueling.
- The contractor will have fuel spill containment supplies onsite in the event of a fuel spill, and its employees trained in the proper application and use of those materials.

Project Implementation: The project is expected to be completed, depending on funding, in 2018. The work would be implemented within the NOAA and FWS designated ‘fish window’ (July through September). The project would take up to two weeks to complete, depending on conditions.

Project Information: Dan Kenney, North Zone Fisheries Biologist, 208-476-8319, dkenney@fs.fed.us

Map of the Steep Creek Logs Large Woody Debris Project

